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A SERMON

Preached before the Honourable Houſe of

COMMONS,

At

WESTMINSTER,

March 31. 1647.

By R. CUDWORTH, B. D.

Εὐσέβει δὲ τέκνον· ὁ γὰρ Εὐσεβῶν ἄκρως Χριστανίζει.

CAMBRIDGE.

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To

THE HONOURABLE House of COMMONS.

THE Scope of this Sermon, which not long ſince exerciſed your Patience (Worthy Senatours) was not to contend for this or that Opinion; but onely to perſwade men to the Life of Chriſt, as the Pith and Kernel of all Religion. Without Which, I may boldly ſay, all the ſeverall Formes of Religion in the World, though we pleaſe our ſelves never ſo much in them, are but ſo many ſeverall Dreams. And thoſe many Opinions about Religion, that are every where ſo eagerly

gerly contended for on all ſides, where This doth not lie at the Bottome, are but ſo many Shadows fighting with one another: ſo that I may well ſay, of the true Chriſtian, that is indeed poſſeſſed of the Life of Chriſtianity, in oppoſition to all thoſe that are but lightly tinctured with the Opinions of it, in the language of the Poet,

Ὅιος πέπυται τοὶ δ' ὡς σκιαὶ ἀίσσουσι.

Wherefore I could not think any thing elſe, either more Neceſſary for Chriſtians in generall, or more Seaſonable at this time, then to ſtirre them up to the reall Eſtabliſhment of the Righteouſneſſe of God in their hearts, and that Participation of the Divine Nature, which the Apoſtle ſpeaketh of. That ſo they might not content themſelves, with mere Phancies and Conceits of Chriſt, without the Spirit of Chriſt really dwelling in them, and Chriſt himſelf inwardly formed in their hearts. Nor ſatiſfie themſelves, with the mere holding of right and Orthodox Opinions, as they conceive; whileſt they are utterly devoid within of that Divine Life, which Chriſt came to kindle in mens Souls; and therefore are ſo apt to ſpend all their zeal upon a violent obtruding of their own Opinions and Apprehenſions upon others, which cannot give entertainment

tainment to them: which, besides its repugnancy to the Doctrine and Example of Christ himself, is like to be the Bellows, that will blow a perpetuall Fire of Discord and Contention, in Christian Commonwealths: whilest in the mean time, these hungry, and starved Opinions, *devoure all the Life and Substance of Religion, as the* Lean Kine, *in* Pharaohs *Dream, did eat up the* Fat. *Nor lastly, Please themselves, onely in the violent Opposing of other mens* Superstitions, *according to the Genious of the present times; without substituting in the room of them, an inward* Principle *of* Spirit, *and* Life, *in their own Souls: for I fear many of us that pull down* Idols *in Churches, may set them up in our Hearts; and whilest we quarrel with* Painted Glasse, *make no scruple at all, of entertaining many foul* Lusts *in our Souls, and committing continuall Idolatry with them.*

*This in generall, was the Designe of this following Discourse; which you were pleased (*Noble Senatours*) not onely to expresse your good Acceptance of; but also to give a Reall Signification of your great undeserved Favour to the Authour of it. Who therefore cannot, but as the least Expression of his Thankfulnesse, humbly devote it to you; presuming to bore again to your Eye, in the same Form,*

in

in which it was delivered to your Eare. Desirous of nothing more, then that it might be some way usefull to You, to kindle in you, the Life and Heat of that, which is endeavoured here, to be described upon Paper: that you may expresse it, both in your private Conversations, and likewise in all your Publick Emploiments for the Common-wealth. That you may, by your kindly Influence, effectually encourage all Goodnesse: and by vertue of your Power and Authority (to use the Phrase of Solomon) scatter away all evil with your eye, as the Sun by his Beams scattereth the Mists and Vapours. That from you, Judgement may runne down like Waters, and Righteousnesse like a mighty Stream, to refresh this whole Land, that thirsteth after them. Which, whilest You distribute them plentifully to others, will bestow, both Strength and Honour to Your selves. For Justice and Righteousnesse are the Establishment of every Throne, of all Civil Power, and Authority; and if these should once forsake it, though there be Lions to support it, it could not stand long. These, together with a good Peace, well setled in a Common-wealth, are all the outward Felicity we can expect, till that happy Time come, which the Prophet foretelleth, and is therefore more then a Platonicall

Idea;

the Wolf ſhall dwell with the [illegible] and the Leopard ſhall lie down with the Kid; and the Calfe, and the young Lion, and the Fatling together, and a little Child lead them: *When*, the ſucking Child ſhall play on the hole of the Aſpe, and the weaned Child ſhall put his hand on the Cockatrice den: *When*, they ſhall not hurt nor deſtroy in all Gods holy Mountaine; for the Earth ſhall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the ſea.

I have but one Word more, if You pleaſe to give me leave; That after your Care for the Advancement of Religion, and the Publick Good of the Common-wealth, You would think it worthy of You, to promote Ingenuous Learning, *and caſt a Favourable Influence upon it. I mean not, that onely, which furniſheth the Pulpit, which you ſeem to be very regardfull of; but that which is more remote from ſuch Popular uſe, in the ſeverall kinds of it, which yet are all of them, both very ſubſervient to Religion, and uſefull to the Common-wealth. There is indeed a* Ψευδωνυμία, *as the* Philoſopher *tells us, a* Baſtardly kind of Literature, *and a* Ψευδώνυμος γνῶσις, *as the* Apoſtle *inſtructeth us, a* knowledge falſely ſo called; *which*

defence not to be pleaded for. But the Noble and Generous Improvement of our Understanding Faculty, in the true Contemplation of the Wisdome, Goodnesse, and other Attributes of God, in this great Fabrick of the Universe, cannot easily be disparaged, without a Blemish cast upon the Maker of it. Doubtlesse, we may as well enjoy, that which God hath communicated of himself to the Creatures, by this Larger faculty of our Understandings, as by those narrow and low faculties of our Senses, and yet no body counts it to be unlawfull, to hear a Lesson plaied upon the Lute or to smell at a Rose. And these raised Improvements of our Naturall understandings, may be as well subservient and subordinate, to a Divine Light in our Minds; as the Naturall use of these outward Creatures here below, to the Life of God in our Hearts. Nay, all true knowledge, doth of it self naturally tend to God, who is the Fountain of it: and would ever be raising of our souls up, upon its wings thither, did not we κατέχειν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ, detain it, and hold it down, in unrighteousnesse, as the Apostle speaketh. All Philosophy to a Wise man, to a truly sanctified Mind, as he in Plutarch speaketh, is but ἐπιστήμη θεολογίας, Matter for Divinity to work upon. Religion is the

Queen of all these inward Endowments of the Soul, and all pure Naturall knowledge, all virgin and undefloured Arts & Sciences are her Handmaids, that rise up and call her Blessed. I need not tell you, how much the skill of Toungues and Languages, besides the excellent use of all Philology in generall, conduceth to the right understanding of the Letter of Sacred Writings, on which the spiritual Notions must be built; for none can possibly be ignorant of that, which have but once heard of a Translation of the Bible. The Apostle exhorteth Private Christians, to whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any vertue, if there be any praise, to think on those things; and therefore it may well become you, (Noble Gentlemen) in your Publick Spheare, to encourage so Noble a Thing as knowledge is, which will reflect so much Lustre and Honour back again upon your selves. That God would direct you in all your Counsels, and still blesse you and prosper you, in all your sincere Endeavours, for the Publick Good, is the hearty Prayer of

Your

Most humble Servant,

RALPH CUDWORTH.

Most humble servant,

RALPH CUDWORTH.

I. John ii. 3, 4.

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments. He that ſaith, I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

WE have much enquiry concerning knowledge in theſe latter times. The ſonnes of Adam are now as buſie as ever himſelf was, about the *Tree of Knowledge* of good and evil, ſhaking the boughs of it, and ſcrambling for the fruit: whileſt, I fear, many are too unmindfull of the *Tree of Life*. And though there be now no Cherubims with their flaming ſwords, to fright men off from it; yet the way that leads to it ſeems to be

be ſolitary and untrodden, as if there were but few that had any mind to taſt of the Fruit of it. There be many that ſpeak of new glimpſes, and diſcoveries of Truth, of dawnings of Goſpel-light; and no queſtion, but God hath reſerved much of this for the very Evening and Sun-ſet of the World, for *in the latter dayes knowledge ſhall be increaſed*: but yet I wiſh we could in the mean time ſee that *day to dawn*, which the Apoſtle ſpeaks of, and that *day-ſtarre to ariſe in mens hearts*. I wiſh whileſt we talk of light, and diſpute about truth, we could walk more as *children of the light*. Whereas if S. Johns rule be good here in the Text, that no man truly knows Chriſt, but he that keepeth his Commandments; it is much to be ſuſpected, that many of us which pretend to light, have a thick and gloomy darkneſſe within over-ſpreading our ſouls. There be now many large Volumes and Diſcourſes written concerning Chriſt, thouſands of controverſies diſcuſſed, infinite problems determined concerning his Divinity, Humanity, Union of both together; and what not? ſo that our bookiſh Chriſtians,

that

that have all their religion in writings and papers, think they are now compleatly furniſhed with all kind of knowledge concerning Chriſt; and when they ſee all their leaves lying about them, they think they have a goodly ſtock of knowledge and truth, and cannot poſsibly miſſe of the way to heaven; as if Religion were nothing but a little *Book-craft*, a mere *paper-skill*. But if S. Johns rule here be good, we muſt not judge of our knowing of Chriſt, by our skill in Books and Papers, but by our keeping of his Commandments. And that I fear will diſcover many of us (notwithſtanding all this light which we boaſt of round about us) to have nothing but Egyptian darkneſſe within upon our hearts. The vulgar ſort think that they know Chriſt enough, out of their Creeds and Catechiſmes, and Confeſsions of Faith: and if they have but a little acquainted themſelves with theſe, and like Parrets conned the words of them, they doubt not but that they are ſufficiently inſtructed in all the myſteries of the Kingdome of Heaven. Many of the more learned, if they can but

wrangle and diſpute about Chriſt, imagine themſelves to be grown great proficients in the School of Chriſt. The greateſt part of the world, whether learned or unlearned, think, that there is no need of purging and purifying of their hearts, for the right knowledge of Chriſt and his Goſpel; but though their lives be never ſo wicked, their hearts never ſo foul within, yet they may know Chriſt ſufficiently out of their Treatiſes and Diſcourſes, out of their mere Syſtems and Bodies of Divinity; which I deny not to be uſefull in a ſubordinate way: although our Saviour preſcribeth his Diſciples another method, to come to the right knowledge of Divine truths, by doing of Gods will; *he that will do my Fathers will* (ſaith he) *ſhall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.* He is a true Chriſtian indeed, not *he* that is onely *book-taught*, but he that is *God-taught*; he that hath an *Unction from the holy one* (as our Apoſtle calleth it) that teacheth him all things; he that hath the Spirit of Chriſt within him, that *ſearcheth* out the *deep things of God: For as no man knoweth the things of a man, ſave the ſpirit of*

man

man which is in him, even ſo the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God. Inke and Paper can never make us Chriſtians, can never beget a new nature, a living principle in us; can never form Chriſt, or any true notions of ſpirituall things in our hearts. The Goſpel, that new Law which Chriſt delivered to the world, it is not merely a *Letter* without us, but a *quickning Spirit* within us. Cold Theorems and Maximes, dry and jejune Diſputes, lean ſyllogiſticall reaſonings, could never yet of themſelves beget the leaſt glympſe of true heavenly light, the leaſt ſap of ſaving knowledge in any heart. All this is but the groping of the poore dark ſpirit of man after truth, to find it out with his own endeavours, and feel it with his own cold and benummed hands. Words and ſyllables which are but dead things, cannot poſsibly convey the living notions of heavenly truths to us. The ſecret myſteries of a Divine Life, of a New Nature, of Chriſt formed in our hearts; they cannot be written or ſpoken, language and expreſsions cannot reach them; neither can they ever be truly underſtood, except the ſoul it ſelf be kind-

led from within, and awakened into the life of them. A Painter that would draw a Roſe, though he may flouriſh ſome likeneſſe of it in figure and colour, yet he can never paint the ſent and fragrancy; or if he would draw a Flame, he cannot put a conſtant heat into his colours; he cannot make his penſil drop a Sound, as the Echo in the Epigramme mocks at him —— *ſi vis ſimilem pingere, pinge ſonum.* All the skill of cunning Artizans and Mechanicks, cannot put a principle of Life into a ſtatue of their own making. Neither are we able to incloſe in words and letters, the Life, Soul, and Eſſence of any Spirituall truths; & as it were to incorporate it in them. Some Philoſophers have determined, that ἀρετὴ is not διδακτὸν, vertue cannot be taught by any certain rules or precepts. Men and books may propound ſome directions to us, that may ſet us in ſuch a way of life and practice, as in which we ſhall at laſt find it within our ſelves, and be experimentally acquainted with it: but they cannot teach it us like a Mechanick Art or Trade. No ſurely, *there is a ſpirit in man:* and *the inſpiration of the Almighty giveth this underſtanding.* But we

ſhall not meet with this ſpirit any where, but in the way of Obedience: the knowledge of Chriſt, and the keeping of his Commandments, muſt alwayes go together, and be mutuall cauſes of one another.

Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments.

He that ſaith, I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

I Come now unto theſe words themſelves, which are ſo pregnant, that I ſhall not need to force out any thing at all from them: I ſhall therefore onely take notice of ſome few obſervations, which drop from them of their own accord, and then conclude with ſome Application of them to our ſelves.

Firſt then, If this be the right way and methode of diſcovering our *knowledge of Chriſt*, by our *keeping of his Commandments*; Then *we may ſafely draw concluſions concerning our ſtate and condition, from the conformity of our lives to the will of Chriſt.* Would we know whether we know Chriſt aright, let us conſider whether the life of Chriſt be in us. *Qui non habet vitam Chriſti*

sti, Christum non habet; He that hath not the life of Christ in him, he hath nothing but the name, nothing but a phansie of Christ, he hath not the substance of him. He that builds his house upon this foundation; not an airy notion of Christ swimming in his brain, but Christ really dwelling and living in his heart; as our Saviour himself witnesseth, he *buildeth his house upon a Rock*; and when the flouds come, and the winds blow, and the rain descends, and beats upon it, it shall stand impregnably. But he that builds all his comfort upon an ungrounded perswasion, that God from all eternity hath loved him, and absolutely decreed him to life and happinesse, and seeketh not for God really dwelling in his soul; he builds his house upon a Quicksand, and it shall suddenly sink and be swallowed up: *his hope shall be cut off, & his trust shall be a spiders web; he shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand, he shall hold it fast but it shall not endure.* We are no where commanded to pry into these secrets, but the wholesome counsell and advise given us, is this; to *make our calling and election sure.* We have no warrant in Scripture, to peep into these hidden

Rolls

Volumes of Eternity, and to make it our first thing that we do when we come to Christ, to spell out our names in the starres, and to perswade our selves that we are certainly elected to everlasting happinesse; before we see the *image of God*, in righteousnesse and true holinesse, shaped in our hearts. Gods everlasting decree, is too dazeling and bright an object for us at first to set our eye upon: it is far easier and safer for us to look upon the raies of his goodnesse and holinesse as they are reflected in our own hearts; and there to read the mild and gende Characters of Gods love to us, in our love to him, and our hearty compliance with his heavenly will: as it is safer for us if we would see the Sunne, to look upon it here below in a pale of water; then to cast up our daring eyes upon the body of the Sun it self, which is too radiant and scorching for us. The best assurance that any one can have of his interest in God, is doubtlesse the conformity of his soul to him. Those divine purposes, whatsoever they be are altogether unsearchable and unknowable by us, they lie wrapt up in everlasting darkenesse, and co-

vered in a deep Abyſſe; who is able to fathom the bottome of them? Let us not therefore make this our firſt attempt towards God and Religion, to perſwade our ſelves ſtrongly of theſe everlaſting Decrees: for if at our firſt flight we aime ſo high, we ſhall happily but ſcorch our wings, and be ſtruck back with lightning, as thoſe *Giants* of old were, that would needs attempt to invade and aſſault heaven. And it is indeed a moſt *Giganticall* Eſſay, to thruſt our ſelves ſo boldly into the lap of heaven; it is the pranck of a *Nimrod*, of a *mighty Hunter* thus rudely to deal with God, and to force heaven and happineſſe before his face whether he will or no. The way to obtain a good aſſurance indeed of our title to heaven, is not to clamber up to it, by a ladder of our own ungrounded perſwaſions; but to dig as low as hell by humility and ſelf-denyall in our own hearts: and though this may ſeem to be the furtheſt way about; yet it is indeed the neereſt, and ſafeſt way to it. We muſt ἀναβαίνειν κάτω and καταβαίνειν ἄνω, as the Greek Epigramme ſpeaks, *aſcend downward*, & *deſcend upward*; if we would indeed come to heaven,

we can get any true perſwaſion of our title to it. The moſt gallant and triumphant confidence of a Chriſtian, riſeth ſafely and ſurely upon this low foundation, that lies deep under ground; and there ſtands firmely and ſtedfaſtly. When our heart is once tuned into a conformity with the word of God, when we feel our will, perfectly to concurre with his will, we ſhal then preſently perceive a *Spirit of adoption* within our ſelves, teaching us to cry *Abba. Father.* We ſhall not then care for peeping into thoſe hidden Records of Eternity, to ſee whether our names be written there in golden characters: no, we ſhall find a copy of Gods thoughts concerning us, written in our own breaſts. There we may read the characters of his favour to us, there we may feel an inward ſenſe of his love to us, flowing out of our hearty and unfained love to him. And we ſhall be more undoubtedly perſwaded of it, then if any of thoſe winged *Watchmen* above, that are privie to heavens ſecrets, ſhould come & tel us; that they ſaw our names enrolled in thoſe *volumes of eternity.* Whereas on the contrary; though we ſtrive to perſwade our ſelves ne-

ver ſo confidently, that God from all eternity hath loved us, and elected us to life and happineſſe; if we do yet in the mean time entertain any iniquity within our hearts, and willingly cloſe with any luſt; do what we can, we ſhall find many a cold qualme ever now and then ſeizing upon us at approching dangers; and when death it ſelf ſhall grimly look us in the face, we ſhall feel our hearts even to die within us, and our ſpirits quite faint away, though we ſtrive to raiſe them and recover them never ſo much, with the *Strong Waters* and *Aqua vitæ* of our own ungrounded preſumptions. The leaſt inward luſt willingly continued in, will be like a *worme*, fretting the *Gourd* of our jolly confidence, and preſumptuous perſwaſion of Gods love, and alwayes gnawing at the root of it: and though we ſtrive to keep it alive, and continually beſprinkle it with ſome dews of our own; yet it will alwayes be dying and withering in our boſomes. But a good Conſcience within, will be alwayes better to a Chriſtian, then *health to his navell, and marrow to his bones*; it will be an everlaſting cordiall to his heart: it will be ſofter to him

then

bed of doune, and he may ſleep ſecurely upon it, in the midſt of raging and tempeſtuous ſeas; when the winds bluſter, and the waves beat round about him. A good conſcience, is the beſt looking-glaſſe of heaven; in which the ſoul may ſee God's thoughts and purpoſes concerning it, as ſo many ſhining ſtarres reflected to it. *Hereby we know that we know Chriſt, hereby we know that Chriſt loves us, if we keep his Commandments.*

Secondly, If hereby onely we know that we know Chriſt, by our keeping his Commandments; *Then the knowledge of Chriſt doth not conſiſt merely in a few barren Notions, in a form of certain dry* and *ſapleſſe Opinions.* Chriſt came not into the world to fil our heads with mere Speculations; to kindle a fire of wrangling and contentious diſpute amongſt us, and to warm our ſpirits againſt one another with nothing but angry & peeviſh debates, whilſt in the mean time our hearts remain all ice within towards God, aud have not the leaſt ſpark of true heavenly fire to melt and thaw them. Chriſt came not to poſſeſſe our brains onely with ſome cold opinions, that

ſend down nothing but a freezing and benumming influence upon our hearts. Chriſt was *Vitæ Magiſter*, not *Scholæ*: and he is the beſt Chriſtian, whoſe heart beats with the trueſt pulſe towards heaven; not he whoſe head ſpinneth out the fineſt cobwebs. He that endeavours really to mortifie his luſts, and to comply with that truth in his life, which his Conſcience is convinced of; is neerer a Chriſtian, though he never heard of Chriſt; then he that believes all the vulgar Articles of the Chriſtian faith, and plainly denyeth Chriſt in his life. Surely, the way to heaven that Chriſt hath taught us, is plain and eaſie, if we have but honeſt hearts: we need not many Criticiſmes, many School-diſtinctions, to come to a right underſtanding of it. Surely, Chriſt came not to enſnare us and intangle us with captious niceties, or to puſle our heads with deep ſpeculations, and lead us through hard and craggie notions into the Kingdome of heaven. I perſwade my ſelf, that no man ſhall ever be kept out of heaven, for not comprehending myſteries that were beyond the reach of his ſhallow underſtanding; if he had but an honeſt

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and good heart, that was ready to comply with Christs Commandments. *Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven?* that is, with high speculations to bring down Christ from thence: or, *Who shall descend into the abysse beneath?* that is with deep searching thoughts to fetch up Christ from thence: but loe, *the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart.* But I wish, it were not the distemper of our times, to scare and fright men onely with *opinions*, and make them onely solicitous about the entertaining of this and that speculation, which will not render them any thing the better in their lives, or the liker unto God; whilst in the mean time there is no such care taken about *keeping of Christs* Commandments, and being renewed in our minds according to the image of God, in righteousnesse and true holinesse. We say, *Loe, here is Christ*; and *Loe, there is Christ*, in these and these *opinions*; whereas in truth, Christ is neither here, nor there, nor any where; but where the Spirit of Christ, where the life of Christ is. Do we not now adayes open and lock up heaven, with the private key of this and that opinion,

ſend down nothing but a freezing and benumming influence upon our hearts. Chriſt was *Vitæ Magiſter*, not *Scholæ*: and he is the beſt Chriſtian, whoſe heart beats with the trueſt pulſe towards heaven; not he whoſe head ſpinneth out the fineſt cobwebs. He that endeavours really to mortifie his luſts, and to comply with that truth in his life, which his Conſcience is convinced of; is neerer a Chriſtian, though he never heard of Chriſt; then he that believes all the vulgar Articles of the Chriſtian faith, and plainly denyeth Chriſt in his life. Surely, the way to heaven that Chriſt hath taught us, is plain and eaſie, if we have but honeſt hearts: we need not many Criticiſmes, many School-diſtinctions, to come to a right underſtanding of it. Surely, Chriſt came not to enſnare us and intangle us with captious niceties, or to puſle our heads with deep ſpeculations, and lead us through hard and craggie notions into the Kingdome of heaven. I perſwade my ſelf, that no man ſhall ever be kept out of heaven, for not comprehending myſteries that were beyond the reach of his ſhallow underſtanding; if he had but an honeſt

and good heart, that was ready to comply with Christs Commandments. *Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven?* that is, with high speculations to bring down Christ from thence: or, *Who shall descend into the abysse beneath?* that is with deep searching thoughts to fetch up Christ from thence: but loe, *the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart.* But I wish, it were not the distemper of our times, to scare and fright men onely with *opinions*, and make them onely solicitous about the entertaining of this and that speculation, which will not render them any thing the better in their lives, or the liker unto God; whilst in the mean time there is no such care taken about *keeping of Christs* Commandments, and being renewed in our minds according to the image of God, in righteousnesse and true holinesse. We say, *Loe, here is Christ*; and *Loe, there is Christ*, in these and these *opinions*; whereas in truth, Christ is neither here, nor there, nor any where; but where the Spirit of Christ, where the life of Christ is. Do we not now adayes open and lock up heaven, with the private key of this and that opinion,

on of our own according to our ſeverall fancies as we pleaſe? And if any one obſerve Chriſts Commandments never ſo ſincerely, and ſerve God, with faith and a pure conſcience, that yet happely skils not of ſome contended for *opinions*, ſome darling *notions*; he hath not the right Shibboleth, he hath not the true Watch-word; he muſt not paſſe the Guards into heaven. Do we not make this and that *opinion*, this and that outward *form*, to be the *Wedding-garment*, and boldly ſentence thoſe to outer darkneſſe, that are not inveſted therewith? Whereas every true Chriſtian, finds the leaſt dram of hearty affection towards God, to be more cordiall and ſovereign to his ſoul; then all the *ſpeculative notions*, and *opinions* in the world: and though he ſtudy alſo to inform his underſtanding aright, and free his mind from all errour and miſapprehenſions; yet it is nothing but the *life of Chriſt* deeply rooted in his heart which is the Chymicall Elixer that he feeds upon. Had he *all faith that he could remove mountains* (as S. Paul ſpeaks) had he *all knowledge, all tongues and languages*; yet he prizeth one dram of love beyond them all. He

accounteth him that feeds upon mere notions in Religion, to be but an aiery and Chamelion-like Chriſtian. He findeth himſelf now otherwiſe rooted and centred in God, then when he did before merely contemplate and gaze upon him: he taſteth and reliſheth God within himſelf, he hath *quendam ſaporem Dei*, a *certain ſavour of him*; whereas before he did but rove and gueſſe at random at him. He feeleth himſelf ſafely anchored in God, and will not be diſſwaded from it; though perhaps he skill not many of thoſe ſubtleties, which others make the Alpha and Omega of their Religion. Neither is he ſcared with thoſe childiſh affrightments, with which ſome would force their private conceits upon him; he is above the ſuperſtitious dreading of mere ſpeculative opinions, as well as the ſuperſtitious reverence of outward ceremonies: he cares not ſo much for ſubtlety, as for ſoundneſſe and health of mind. And indeed, as it was well ſpoken by a noble Philoſopher, ἄνευ ἀρετῆς θεὸς ὄνομα μόνον, that without *purity and virtue God is nothing but an empty name*; ſo it is as true here, that without obedience to Chriſts

Commandments, without the *life of Christ* dwelling in us, whatſoever *opinions* we entertain of him, Chriſt is but onely named by us, he is not *known*. I ſpeak not here againſt a free and ingenuous enquiry into all Truth, according to our ſeverall abilities and opportunities, I plead not for the captivating and enthralling of our judgements to the Dictates of men, I do not diſparage the naturall improvement of our underſtanding faculties by true Knowledge, which is ſo noble and gallant a perfection of the mind: but the thing which I aime againſt is, the diſpiriting of the life and vigour of our Religion, by dry ſpeculations, and making it nothing but a mere dead ſcheleton of *opinions*, a few dry bones without any fleſh and ſinews tyed up together: and the miſplacing of all our zeal upon an eager proſecution of theſe, which ſhould be ſpent to better purpoſe upon other objects. Knowledge indeed is a thing farre more excellent then riches, outward pleaſures, worldly dignities, or any thing elſe in the world beſides Holineſſe, and the Conformity of our wills to the will of God; but yet our happineſſe conſiſteth not

in it, but in a certain Divine Temper & Conſtitution of ſoul which is farre above it. But it is a piece of that corruption that runneth through humane nature, that we naturally prize Truth, more then Goodneſſe; Knowledge, more then Holineſſe. We think it a gallant thing to be fluttering up to Heaven with our wings of Knowledge and Speculation: whereas the higheſt myſtery of a Divine Life here, and of perfect Happineſſe hereafter, conſiſteth in nothing but mere Obedience to the Divine Will. Happineſſe is nothing but that inward ſweet delight, that will ariſe from the Harmonious agreement between our wills and Gods will. There is nothing contrary to God in the whole world, nothing that fights againſt him but *Self-will*. This is the ſtrong Caſtle, that we all keep garriſon'd againſt heaven in every one of our hearts, which God continually layeth ſiege unto: and it muſt be conquered and demoliſhed, before we can conquer heaven. It was by reaſon of this *Self-will*, that Adam fell in Paradiſe; that thoſe glorious Angels, thoſe *Morning-ſtarres*, kept not their firſt ſtation, but dropt down from heaven like Fal-

ling ſtarres, and ſunk into this condition of bitterneſſe, anxiety, and wretchedneſſe in which now they are. They all intangled themſelves with the length of their own wings, they would needs will more and otherwiſe then God would will in them: and going about to make their wills wider, and to enlarge them into greater amplitude; the more they ſtrugled, they found themſelves the faſter pinioned, & crowded up into narrowneſſe and ſervility; inſomuch that now they are not able to uſe any wings at all, but inheriting the ſerpents curſe, can onely creep with their bellies upon the earth. Now our onely way to recover God & happines again, is not to ſoar up with our underſtandings, but to deſtroy this *Self-will* of ours: and then we ſhall find our wings to grow again, our plumes fairly ſpread, & our ſelves raiſed aloft into the free Aire of perfect liberty which is perfect Happineſſe. There is nothing in the whole world able to do us good or hurt, but *God* and our own *Will*; neither riches nor poverty, nor diſgrace nor honour, neither life nor death, nor Angels nor Divels; but Willing or Not-willing as we ought to do.

do. Should Hell it ſelf ſhoot all its fiery darts againſt us, if our will be right, if it be informed by the Divine Will; they can do us no hurt; we have then, (if I may ſo ſpeak,) an inchanted Shield that is impenetrable, and will beate off all. God will not hurt us, and Hell cannot hurt us, if we will nothing but what God wills. Nay, then we are acted by God himſelf, and the whole Divinity floweth in upon us; and where we have caſhiered this *Self-will* of ours, which did but ſhackle and confine our ſoules, our wills ſhall then become truly free, being widened and enlarged to the extent of Gods own will. *Hereby we know that we know Chriſt indeed*, not by our *Speculative Opinions* concerning him, *but by our keeping of his Commandments.*

Thirdly, if hereby we are to judge whether we truly *know Chriſt*, by our *keeping of his Commandments*; ſo that *he that ſaith he knoweth him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a lyar*; Then, *This was not the Plot and deſigne of the Goſpel, to give the world an indulgence to ſin, upon what pretence ſoever.* Though we are too prone, to make ſuch miſcõſtructions of it: as if God had

had intended nothing elſe in it, but to *dandle* our corrupt nature, and contrive a ſmooth and eaſie way for us to come to happineſſe, without the toilſome labour of ſubduing our luſts and ſinfull affections. Or, As if the Goſpel were nothing elſe but a Declaration to the World, of Gods ingaging his affections from all eternity, on ſome particular perſons, in ſuch a manner, as that he would reſolve to love them, and dearly embrace them, though he never made them partakers of his Image in righteouſneſſe and true holineſſe: and though they ſhould remain under the power of all their luſts, yet they ſhould ſtill continue his *beloved ones*, and he would notwithſtanding, at laſt bring them undoubtedly into heaven. Which is nothing elſe, but to make the God that we worſhip, the God of the new Teſtament, a προσωποληπτης, *an accepter of perſons*: and one that ſhould encourage that in the world which is diametrally oppoſite to Gods own Life and Being. And indeed nothing is more ordinary, then for us to ſhape out ſuch monſtrous and deformed Notions of God unto our ſelves, by looking upon him through the *coloured Medium* of our

own corrupt hearts, and having the *eye* of our ſoul *tinctured* by the ſuffuſions of our own luſts. And therefore, becauſe we mortalls can *fondly* love and hate, and ſometimes, hug the very Vices, of thoſe to whom our affections are engaged, and kiſſe their very Deformities; we are ſo ready to ſhape out a Deity like unto our ſelves, and to faſhion out ſuch a *God*, as will in Chriſt at leaſt, hug the very wickedneſſe of the world: and in thoſe that be once his own, by I know not what, *fond* affection, appropriated to himſelf, connive at their very ſinnes, ſo that they ſhall not make the leaſt breach betwixt himſelf and them. Truly, I know not whether of the two, be the worſe Idolatry, and of the deeper ſtain; for a man to make a god out of a *piece of wood*, and *fall down unto it and worſhip it, and ſay, Deliver me, for thou art my God*, as it is expreſſed in the Prophet *Iſaiah*; or to ſet up ſuch an Idol-god of our own Imagination as this is, faſhioned out according to the ſimilitude of our own *fondneſſe* and wickedneſſe: and when we ſhould paint out God with the livelieſt Colours, that we can poſsibly borrow from any created being,

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with the pureſt Perfections that we can abſtract from them; to draw him out thus with the blackeſt Coal of our own corrupt hearts; and to make the very blots and blurs of our own ſouls, to be the Letters, which we ſpell out his name by. Thus do we that are Children of the Night, make black and ugly repreſentations of God unto our ſelves, as the Ethiopians were wont to do, copying him out according to our own likeneſſe; and ſetting up that unto our ſelves for a god, which we love moſt dearly in our ſelves, that is, our Luſts. But there is no ſuch God as this any where in the world, but onely in ſome mens falſe imaginations, who know not all this while, that they look upon themſelves inſtead of God, and make an Idol of themſelves, which they vvorſhip and adore for him; being ſo full of themſelves, that vvhatſoever they ſee round about them, even God himſelf, they colour vvith their ovvn Tincture: like him that Ariſtotle ſpeaks of, that vvhereſoever he vvent, and vvhatſoever he looked upon, he ſavv ſtill his ovvn face, as in a glaſſe, repreſented to him. And therefore it is no vvonder if men ſeem naturally

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more devoutly affected tovvard ſuch an Imaginary God, as we have now deſcribed, then to the True Reall God, clothed with his own proper Attributes; ſince it is nothing but an Image of themſelves, which *Narciſſus-like* they fall in love with: no wonder if they kiſſe and dandle ſuch a *Baby-god* as this, which like little children, they have dreſſed up out of the clouts of their own fond Phancies, according to their own likneſſe, of purpoſe that they might play and ſport with it. But God will ever *dwell* in ſpotleſſe *light*, howſoever we paint him and disfigure him here below: he will ſtill be circled about, with his own raies of unſtained and immaculate glory. And though the Goſpel be not God, as he is in his own *Brightneſſe*, but God *Vailed* and *Masked* to us, God in a ſtate of Humiliation, and Condeſcent, as the Sun in a Rainbow; yet it is nothing elſe but a clear and unſpotted Mirrour of Divine Holineſſe, Goodneſſe, Purity; in which Attributes lies the very Life and Eſſence of God himſelf. The Goſpel is nothing elſe, but God deſcending into the World in *Our Form*, and converſing with us in our likeneſſe; that he

might allure, and draw us up to God, and make us partakers of his *Divine Form.* Θεὸς γέγονεν ἄνθρωπος (as *Athanasius* speaks) ἵνα ἡμᾶς εἰς ἑαυτὸν θεοποιήσῃ, *God was therefore incarnated and made man, that he might Deifie us*, that is, (as S. *Peter* expresseth it) make us *partakers of the Divine nature*. Now, I say, the very proper Character, and Essentiall Tincture of God himself, is nothing else but *Goodnesse*. Nay, I may be bold to adde, That God is therefore God, because he is the highest and most perfect Good: and Good is not therefore Good, because God out of an arbitrary will of his, would have it so. Whatsoever God doth in the World, he doth it as it is suitable to the highest Goodnesse; the first Idea, and fairest Copy of which is his own Essence. Vertue and Holinesse in creatures, as *Plato* well discourseth in his *Euthyphro*, are not *therefore Good, because God loveth them*, and will have them be accounted such; but rather, *God therefore loveth them because they are in themselves simply good.* Some of our own Authors, go a little further yet, and tell us; that God doth not fondly love himself, because he is *himself*, but therefore he loveth him-

himself because he is the higheſt and moſt abſolute *Goodneſſe*: ſo that if there could be any thing in the world better then God, God would love that better then himſelf: but becauſe he is Eſſentially the moſt perfect *Good*; therefore he cannot but love his own *goodneſſe*, infinitely above all other things. And it is another miſtake which ſometimes we have of God, by ſhaping him out according to the Model of our ſelves, when we make him nothing but a *blind*, *dark*, *impetuous Self will*, running through the world; ſuch as we our ſelves are furiouſly acted with, that have not the Ballaſt of *abſolute goodneſſe* to poize and ſettle us. That I may therefore come nearer to the thing in hand: God who is *abſolute goodneſſe*, cannot love any of his Creatures & take pleaſure in them, without beſtowing a communication of his Goodneſſe and Likeneſſe upon them. God cannot make a Goſpel, to promiſe men Life & Happineſſe hereafter, without being *regenerated*, & made partakers of his *holineſſe*. As ſoon may Heaven and Hell, be reconciled together, and lovingly ſhake hands with one another; as God can be fondly indulgent to any ſinne,

in whomſoever it be. As ſoon may Light and Darkneſſe be eſpouſed together, and Mid-night be married to the Noon-day; as God can be joyned in a league of friendſhip, to any wicked Soul.

The great Deſigne of God in the Goſpel, is to clear up this Miſt of Sin and Corruption, which we are here ſurrounded vvith: and to bring up his creatures, out of the *ſhadow of death*, to the *Region of Light* above, the Land of Truth and Holineſſe. The great Myſtery of the Goſpel, is to eſtabliſh a *God-like* frame and diſpoſition of ſpirit, which conſiſts in Righteouſneſſe and true Holineſſe, in the hearts of men. And Chriſt, who is the great and mighty Saviour, he came on purpoſe into the World; not onely to ſave us from *Fire and Brimſtone*, but alſo to ſave us from our *Sins*. Chriſt hath therefore made an Expiation of our ſins, by his death upon the Croſſe, that we being thus *delivered out of the hands of* theſe our greateſt *enemies, might ſerve God without fear, in holineſſe and righteouſneſſe before him, all the dayes of our life*. This *grace of God that bringeth ſalvation*, hath therefore *appeared to all men*, in the Goſpel, that it might

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teach us to deny ungodlineſſe and worldly luſts, and that we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godlily in this preſent world: looking for that bleſſed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purifie unto himſelf a peculiar people, Zealous of good works. Theſe things I write unto you (ſaith our *Apoſtle* a little before my text) *that you ſinne not*: therein expreſsing the end of the whole Goſpel, which is, not onely to *cover ſinne*, by ſpreading the Purple Robe of Chriſts death and ſufferings over it, whilſt it ſtill remaineth in us with all its filth and noiſomneſſe unremoved; but alſo, to convey a powerfull and mighty Spirit of holineſſe, to *cleanſe* us, and *free* us from it. And this is a greater grace of Gods to us, then the former, which ſtill go both together in the Goſpel; beſides the free remiſsion and pardon of ſinne in the *bloud of Chriſt*, the delivering of us from the power of ſinne, by the *Spirit of Chriſt* dwelling in our hearts. Chriſt came not into the world onely, to caſt a Mantle over us, and hide all our filthy ſores, from Gods avenging eye, with his merits and righteouſneſſe;

but he came likewiſe, to be a Chirurgeon, and Phyſitian of ſouls, to free us from the filth and corruption of them; which is more grievous and burdenſome, more noyſome to a true Chriſtian, then the guilt of ſinne it ſelf: Should a poore wretched, and diſeaſed creature, that is full of ſores and ulcers, be covered all over with Purple, or clothed with Scarlet; he would take but little contentment in it, whileſt his ſores, and wounds, remain upon him: and he had much rather be raied in rags, ſo he might obtain but ſoundneſſe and health within. The Goſpel is a true *Bethesda, a pool of Grace*, where ſuch poore, lame, and infirme creatures, as we are, upon the moving of Gods ſpirit in it, may deſcend down, not onely to waſh our skin and outſide, but alſo to be cured of our diſeaſes within. And what ever the world thinks, there is a powerfull Spirit that *moves* upon theſe *waters*, the waters of the Goſpel, for this new Creation, the Regeneration of ſouls; the very ſame Spirit, that once *moved* upon *the waters* of the univerſe at the firſt Creation, and ſpreading its mighty wings over them, did hatch the new-born World

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into this perfection: I ſay, the ſame *Almighty* ſpirit of Chriſt, ſtill worketh in the Goſpel, ſpreading its gentle, healing, quickening wings, over our ſouls. The Goſpel, is not like *Abana* and *Pharphar*, thoſe common Rivers of *Damaſcus*, that could onely cleanſe the outſide; but it is a true *Jordan*, in which ſuch leprouſe *Naamans*, as we all are, may *Waſh and be clean. Bleſſed* indeed *are they, whoſe iniquities are forgiven, and whoſe ſinnes are covered: Bleſſed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute ſinne*: but yet, rather Bleſſed are they, whoſe ſinnes are removed like a *Morning-cloud*, and quite taken away from them: *Bleſſed*, thrice bleſſed, *are they, that hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſſe, for they ſhall be ſatisfied: Bleſſed are the pure in heart for they ſhall ſee God.* Our Saviour Chriſt came (as *John* the *Baptiſt* tells us) *with a Fan in his hand, that he might throughly purge his floore and gather his wheat into his garner: but the chaff he will burn up, with unquenchable fire.* He came (as the Prophet *Malachy* ſpeaks) *like a Refiners fire, and like Fullers ſop; to ſit as a Refiner and Purifier of ſilver, and to purifie all the ſonnes of Levi, and purge them as gold and ſilver, that they*

may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteouſneſse. Chriſt came not onely, to write *Holineſse to the Lord* upon *Aarons* forehead, and to put his *Urim* and *Thummim* upon his Breaſt-plate, but *This is the Covenant, ſaith the Lord, that I will make with them in thoſe dayes; I will put my Law into their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and* then *I will be their God, and they ſhall be my people: they ſhall be all Kings and Prieſts unto me. God ſent his own ſonne* (ſaith S^t. *Paul*) *in the likeneſse of ſinfull fleſh, and by a ſacrifice for ſinne, condemned ſinne in the fleſh: that the righteouſneſse of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit.* The *firſt Adam*, as the Scripture tells us, brought in a reall defilement, which like a noiſome Leproſie, hath overſpread all mankind: and therefore *the ſecond Adam* muſt not onely fill the World with a *conceit*, of Holineſſe, and meer Imaginary Righteouſneſſe; but he muſt really convey, ſuch an *immortall ſeed* of Grace into the hearts of true Believers, as may prevaile ſtill more and more in them, till it have at laſt, quite wrought out that *poiſon* of the *Serpent*. Chriſt, that was nothing, but *Divinity dwelling in a Tabernacle of* fleſh,

flesh, and God himself immediatly acting a humane nature; he came into the World to kindle here that *Divine life* amongst men, which is certainly dearer unto God, then any thing else whatsoever in the World; and to propagate this Celestiall fire, from one heart still unto another, untill the end of the World. Neither is he, or was he ever absent from this Spark of his Divinity, kindled amongst men, wheresoever it be, though he seem bodily to be withdrawn from us. He is the standing, constant, inexhausted Fountain, of this divine Light and Heat; that still toucheth every soul that is enlivened by it, with an out-stretched Ray, and freely lends his Beams, and dispersеth his *influence* to all, from the beginning of the World to the end of it. *We* all *receive of his fulnesse, grace for grace*, as all the Starres in heaven, are said to light their Candles at the Suns flame. For though his body be withdrawn from us, yet by the lively and *virtuall Contact* of his Spirit, he is alwayes kindling, cheering, quickening, warming, enlivening hearts. Nay, this *Divine life* begun and kindled in any heart, wheresoever it be, is *something of God in flesh*;

and, in a ſober and qualified ſence, *Divinity incarnate*; and all particular Chriſtians, that are really poſſeſſed of it, ſo many *Myſticall Chriſts*. And God forbid, that *Gods own Life* and *Nature* here in the World, ſhould be forlorn, forſaken, and abandoned of God himſelf. Certainly, where-ever it is, though never ſo little, like a ſweet, young, tender *Babe*, once born in any heart; when it crieth unto God the *father* of it, with pitifull and bemoning looks imploring his compaſsion; it cannot chuſe but move his *fatherly bowels*, and make them *yerne*, and turn towards it, and by ſtrong ſympathy, draw his compaſſionate arm to help and relieve it. Never was any tender Infant, ſo dear to thoſe Bowels that begat it, as an *Infant new-born Chriſt, formed in the heart* of any true believer, to God the *father* of it. Shall the *children of this World*, the *ſonnes of darkneſſe*, be moved with ſuch tender affection, and compaſsion, towards the fruit of their bodies, their own Naturall offpring; and ſhall God who is the *Father of lights*, the fountain of all goodneſſe, be moved with no compaſsion towards his true Spirituall Offpring, and have no regard

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to thoſe ſweet *Babes of Light*, ingendered by his own beams in mens hearts, that in their lovely countenances, bear the reſemblance of his own face, and call him their *father*? Shall he ſee them lie fainting, and gaſping, and dying here in the World, for want of nothing to preſerve and keep them, but an *Influence* from him, who firſt gave them life and breath? No; hear the language of Gods heart, heare *the ſounding of his bowels* towards them: *Is it Ephraim my dear ſonne? Is it that pleaſant child? ſince I ſpake of him I do earneſtly remember him, my bowels*, my bowels *are troubled for him; I will ſurely have mercy upon him, ſaith the Lord.* If thoſe expreſsions of goodneſſe and tender affection here amongſt creatures, be but drops of that full Ocean that is in God; how can we then imagine, that this *Father* of our *ſpirits*, ſhould have ſo little regard to his own dear Offſpring, I do not ſay our ſouls, but that which is the very Life and Soul of our ſouls, the *Life of God* in us; which is nothing elſe but Gods own Self communicated to us, his own Sonne born in our hearts; as that he ſhould ſuffer it to be cruelly murdered in its *Infancy* by our Sinnes,

and like young *Hercules* in its very *cradle*, to be ſtrangled by thoſe filthy *vipers*; that he ſhould ſee him to be crucified by wicked *Luſts*, nailed faſt to the croſſe by invincible *Corruptions*; pierced and gored on every ſide with the poiſoned ſpears of the Devils *temptations*, and at laſt to give up the Ghoſt; and yet his tender heart not at all relent, nor be all this while impaſsionated with ſo ſad a ſpectacle? Surely, we cannot think he hath ſuch an *adamantine* breaſt, ſuch a *flinty* nature as this is. What then? muſt we ſay that though indeed he be willing, yet he is not able, to reſcue his crucified and tormented *Sonne*, now bleeding upon the croſſe; to *take him down* from thence *and ſave him*? Then muſt Sinne be more powerfull then God: that weak, craſie, and ſickly thing, more ſtrong then the *Rock of ages*: and the Devil the Prince of Darkneſſe, more mighty, then the God of Light. No ſurely, there is a weakneſſe and impotency in all Evil, a maſculine ſtrength and vigour in all Goodneſſe: and therefore doubtleſſe the *Higheſt Good*, the πρῶτον ἀγαθὸν as the Philoſophers call it, is the ſtrongeſt thing in the World.

Nil

Nil potentius Summo Bono. Gods *Power* diſplaied in the World, is nothing but his *Goodneſſe* ſtrongly reaching all things, from heighth to depth, from the higheſt Heaven, to the loweſt Hell: and irreſiſtibly imparting it ſelf to every thing, according to thoſe ſeverall degrees in which it is capable of it. Have the Fiends of Darkneſſe then, thoſe poore forlorn ſpirits, that are fettered and locked up in the Chaines of their own wickedneſſe, any ſtrength to withſtand the force of infinite *Goodneſſe*, which is infinite *Power*? or do they not rather skulk in holes of darkneſſe, and flie like Bats and Owls, before the approching beams of this Sun of Righteouſneſſe? Is God powerfull to kill and to deſtroy, to damne and to torment, and is he not powerfull to ſave? Nay, it is the ſweeteſt Flower in all the Garland of his Attributes, it is the richeſt Diamond in his Crown of Glory, that he is *Mighty to ſave*: and this is farre more magnificent for him, then to be ſtiled *Mighty to deſtroy*. For that, except it be in the way of Juſtice; ſpeaks no Power at all, but mere Impotency, for the Root of all Power, is Goodneſſe. Or muſt we ſay laſtly, that God

indeed is able to reſcue us out of the Power of ſinne & Satan, when we ſigh & grone towards him, but yet ſometimes to exerciſe his abſolute Authority, his uncontrollable Dominion, he delights rather in plunging wretched ſouls down into infernall Night, & everlaſting Darkneſſe? What ſhall we then make the God of the whole World? Nothing but a cruell and dreadfull *Erynnis*, with *curled fiery Snakes* about his head, and *Firebrands* in his hands, thus governing the World? Surely this will make us either ſecretly to think, that there is no God at all in the World, if he muſt needs be ſuch, or elſe to wiſh heartily, there were none. But doubtleſſe, God will at laſt, confute all theſe our *Miſapprehenſions* of him, he will unmask our *Hypocriticall pretences*, and clearly caſt the ſhame of all our ſinfull Deficiencies, upon our ſelves, and vindicate his own Glory from receiving the leaſt ſtain or blemiſh by them. In the mean time, let us know, that the Goſpel now requireth, far more of us, then ever the Law did; for it requireth a *New Creature*, a *Divine Nature*, *Chriſt formed in us*: but yet withall, it beſtoweth a *quickening Spirit*, an

enlivening

enlivening Power, to inable us, to expreſſe that, which is required of us. Whoſoever therefore truly *knows Chriſt*, the ſame alſo *keepeth Chriſts Commandments*. But, he *that ſaith, I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

I Have now done with the *Firſt part* of my Diſcourſe, concerning thoſe *Obſervations*, which ariſe naturally from the Words, and offer themſelves to us: I ſhall in the next place, proceed to make ſome generall *Application* of them, all together.

NOw therefore, I beſeech you, Let us conſider, whether or no we know *Chriſt* indeed: Not by our acquaintance with *Syſtems and Modells* of Divinity; not by our skill in *Books* and *Papers*; but by our *keeping of Chriſts Commandments*. All the Books and writings which we converſe with, they can but repreſent ſpirituall Objects to our underſtandings; which yet we can never ſee in their own true Figure, Colour, and Proportion, untill we have a *Divine light* within, to irradiate,

irradiate, and ſhine upon them. Though there be never ſuch excellent truths concerning Chriſt, and his Goſpel, ſet down in words and letters; yet they will be but unknown Characters to us, untill we have a *Living-ſpirit* within us, that can decypher them: untill the ſame Spirit, by ſecret Whiſpers in our hearts, do comment upon them, which did at firſt endite them. There be many that underſtand, the Greek and Hebrew of the *Scripture*, the Originall Languages in which the Text was written, that never underſtood the *Language of the ſpirit*. There is a *Caro* and a *Spiritus*, a *Fleſh* and a *Spirit*, a *Bodie* and a *Soul*, in all the writings of the Scriptures: it is but the *Fleſh*, and *Body*, of Divine Truths, that is printed upon Paper; which many Moths of Books and Libraries, do onely feed upon; many Walking Scheletons of knowledge, that bury and entombe Truths, in the Living Sepulchres of their ſouls, do onely converſe with: ſuch as never did any thing elſe, but pick at the mere Bark and Rind of Truths, and crack the Shels of them. But there is a *Soul*, and *Spirit* of divine Truths, that could never yet be congealedinto

Inke,

Inke, that could never be blotted upon Paper, which by a ſecret traduction and conveiance, paſſeth from one Soul unto another, being able to dwell and lodge no where, but in a Spirituall being, in a Living thing; becauſe it ſelf is nothing but *Life* and *Spirit*. Neither can it, where indeed it is, expreſſe it ſelf ſufficiently in Words and Sounds, but it will beſt declare and ſpeak it ſelf in Actions: as the old manner of *writing* among the Egyptians was, not by Words, but Things. The *Life* of divine Truths, is better expreſſed in Actions then in Words, becauſe Actions are more *Living* things, then words; Words, are nothing but the dead Reſemblances, and Pictures of thoſe Truths, which *live* and *breath* in Actions: and the *Kingdome of* God (as the Apoſtle ſpeaketh) *conſiſteth not in Word*, but in Life, and *Power*. Τὰ πρόβατα, ὃ χορτον φέροντα τοῖς ποιμέσιν ὀπιλφχνύει πόσον ἔφαγεν· (ſaith the Morall Philoſopher) ἀλλὰ τὴν πορὰν ἔσω πέψαντα, ἔριον ἔξω φέρει ϗ γάλα· *Sheep do not come, and bring their Fodder to their Shepheard, and ſhew him how much they eat, but inwardly concocting and digeſting it, they make it appear, by the Fleece which they wear upon*

 their

their backs, and by the Milke which they give. And let not us Chriſtians affect onely to talk and diſpute of Chriſt, and ſo meaſure our knowledge of him by our words; but let us ſhew ἀπὸ τῆς θεωρημάτων περθέντων τὰ ἔργα, our *knowledge concocted* into our lives and actions; and then let us really manifeſt that we are Chriſts *Sheep* indeed, that we are his *Diſciples*, by that *Fleece* of Holineſſe, which we wear, and by the *Fruits* that we dayly yield in our lives and converſations: for *herein* (ſaith Chriſt) *is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; ſo ſhall ye be my Diſciples.* Let us not (I beſeech you) judge of our *knowing Chriſt*, by our ungrounded *Perſwaſions* that Chriſt from all Eternity hath loved us, and given himſelf particularly for Us, without the Conformity of our lives to *Chriſts Commandments*, without the reall partaking of the Image of Chriſt in our hearts. The great Myſterie of the Goſpel, it doth not lie onely in *Chriſt without us*, (though we muſt know alſo what he hath done for us) but the very Pith and Kernel of it, conſiſts in *Chriſt inwardly formed* in our hearts. Nothing is truly Ours, but what lives in our

Spirits.

Spirits. *Salvation* it ſelf cannot *ſave* us, as long as it is onely without us; no more then *Health* can cure us, and make us ſound, when it is not within us, but ſomewhere at diſtance from us; no more then *Arts and Sciences*, whilſt they lie onely in Books and Papers without us; can make us learned. The Goſpel, though it be a Sovereigne and Medicinall thing in it ſelf, yet the mere knowing and believing of the hiſtory of it, will do us no good: we can receive no vertue from it, till it be inwardly digeſted & concocted into our ſouls; till it be made *Ours*, and become a *living thing* in our hearts. The Goſpel, if it be onely without us, cannot ſave us; no more then that Phyſitians Bill, could cure the ignorant Patient of his diſeaſe, who, when it was commended to him, took the Paper onely, and put it up in his pocket, but never drunk the Potion that was preſcribed in it. All that Chriſt did for us in the fleſh, when he was here upon earth; From his lying in a *Manger*, when he was born in *Bethlehem*, to his bleeding upon the *Croſſe* on *Golgotha*; it will not ſave us from our ſinnes, unleſſe Chriſt by his Spirit dwell in us. It will not

avail us, to believe that he was born of a *Virgin*, unleſſe the *power of the moſt High overſhadow* our hearts; and beget him there likewiſe. It will not profit us, to believe that he died upon the *Croſſe* for us; unleſſe we be *baptized into his death*, by the Mortification of all our luſts; unleſſe *the old man of ſinne be crucified* in our hearts. Chriſt indeed hath made an Expiation for our ſinnes upon his Croſſe; and the Bloud of Chriſt is the onely ſovereign Balſame to free us from the guilt of them: but yet beſides the *ſprinkling* of the *bloud* of Chriſt upon us, we muſt be made partakers alſo of his *ſpirit*. Chriſt came into the World, as well to redeem us from the power and bondage of our ſinnes, as to free us from the guilt of them. *You know* (ſaith S. *John*) *that he was manifeſted, to take away our ſinnes; whoſoever therefore abideth in him, ſinneth not, whoſoever ſinneth, hath not ſeen nor known him.* Loe the end of Chriſts coming into the World, Loe a deſigne worthy of *God manifeſted in the fleſh*. Chriſt did not take all thoſe paines; to lay aſide his Robes of Glory, and come down hither into the World; to enter into a Virgins wombe; to be born in our humane

ſhape, and be laid a poore crying infant in a Manger; & having no *form nor comlineſſe* at all upon him, to take upon him the *Form of a ſervant*; to undergo a reprochfull and ignominious life, and at laſt to be abandoned to a ſhamefull death, a death upon the Croſſe; I ſay, he did not do all this, merely to bring in a *Notion* into the World, without producing any reall and ſubſtantiall effect at all, without the changing, mending, and reforming of the World: ſo that men ſhould ſtill be as wicked as they were before, and as much under the power of the Prince of Darkneſſe; onely, they ſhould not be *thought ſo*: they ſhould ſtill remain as full of all the filthy ſores, of ſinne & corruption as before; onely, they ſhould be *accounted whole*. Shall God come down from heaven, & *pitch* a *Tabernacle* amongſt men? Shall he undertake ſuch a huge Deſigne, and make ſo great a noiſe of doing ſomething, which, when it is all ſummed up, ſhall not at laſt amount to a *Reality*? Surely, Chriſt did not undergo all this to ſo little purpoſe; he would not take all this paines for us, that he might be able at laſt, to put into our hands, nothing but a Blanck. He

was with child, he *was in pain and travel*, and hath *he brought forth nothing but wind*, hath he been delivered *of the Eaſtwind*? Is that great deſigne that was ſo long carried in the Wombe of Eternity, now proved abortive, or elſe nothing but a mere windy birth? No ſurely, The end of the Goſpel is *Life* and *Perfection*, 'tis a *Divine nature*, 'tis a *Godlike* frame and diſpoſition of ſpirit; 'tis to make us partakers of the *Image of God* in Righteouſneſſe and true Holineſſe, without which, Salvation it ſelf were but a Notion. Chriſt came indeed into the World, to make an Expiation and Atonement for our ſinnes, but the end of this was, that we might eſchew ſinne, that we might forſake *all ungodlineſſe and worldly luſts*. The Goſpel declares pardon of ſinne to thoſe, that are *heavy laden* with it, and willing to be disburdened, to this end, that it might quicken and enliven us to new obedience. Whereas otherwiſe, the *Guilt* of ſinne might have detained us in horrour and deſpair, and ſo have kept us ſtill more ſtrongly under the *Power* of it, in ſad and diſmall apprehenſions of Gods wrath provoked againſt us, and inevitably falling on us. But

Chriſt

Chriſt hath now appeared, like a *Day-ſtarre* with moſt cheerfull beames; nay, he is the *Sun of Righteouſneſſe himſelf*; which hath riſen upon the World with his *healing wings*, with his exhilarating light, that he might chaſe away all thoſe black deſpairing thoughts from us. But Chriſt did not riſe, that we ſhould play, and ſport, and wantonize with his light; but that we ſhould do *the works of the day* in it: that we ſhould walk ἐυσχημόνως (as the Apoſtle ſpeaketh) not in our *Night-clothes* of ſinfull Deformity, but clad all over with the comely *Garments of Light*. The Goſpel is not big with child of a *Phancie*, of a mere *Conceit* of righteouſneſſe without us, hanging at diſtance over us; whilſt our hearts within, are nothing but Cages of *unclean birds*, and like Houſes continually haunted with Devils, nay the very Rendezvouz of thoſe Fiends of Darkneſſe. Holineſſe, is the beſt thing, that God himſelf can beſtow upon us, either in this World, or the World to come. True Evangelicall Holineſſe, that is, *Chriſt formed* in the hearts of believers, is the very Cream, and Quinteſſence of the *Goſpel*.

And

And were our hearts ſound within, were there not many thick and dark fumes, that did ariſe from thence, and cloud our underſtandings, we could not eaſily conceive the ſubſtance of Heaven it ſelf, to be any thing elſe but *Holineſſe*, freed from thoſe encumbrances, that did ever clog it, and accloy it here; neither ſhould we wiſh for any other Heaven, beſides this. But many of us are like thoſe Children, whoſe Stomacks are ſo vitiated by ſome diſeaſe, that they think, Aſhes, Coal, Mudwall, or any ſuch traſh, to be more pleaſant, then the moſt wholeſome food: ſuch ſickly and diſtempered Appetites have we about theſe ſpirituall things, that hanker after I know not what vain ſhews of happineſſe, whilſt in the mean time we neglect that which is the onely true food of our ſouls, that is able ſolidly to nouriſh them up to *everlaſting life*. Grace is *Holineſſe Militant*, Holineſſe encumbred with many enemies and difficulties, which it ſtill fights againſt, and manfully quits it ſelf of: and Glory is nothing elſe, but *Holineſſe Triumphant*; Holineſſe with a Palme of Victorie in her hand, and a Crown upon her head. *Deus*

ipſe,

ipſe, cum omni ſuâ bonitate, quatenus extra me eſt, non facit me beatum; ſed quatenus in me eſt: God himſelf cannot make me happy, if he be onely without me; and unleſſe he give in a participation of himſelf, and his own likeneſſe into my ſoul. Happineſſe is nothing, but the releaſing and unfettering of our ſouls, from all theſe narrow, ſcant, and particular good things; and the eſpouſing of them to the Higheſt and moſt Univerſall Good, which is not *this* or *that* particular good, but *goodneſſe* it ſelf: and this is the ſame thing that we call Holineſſe. Which, becauſe we our ſelves are ſo little acquainted with; being for the moſt part ever courting a mere Shadow of it; therefore we have ſuch low, abject, and beggerly conceits thereof; whereas it is in it ſelf, the moſt noble, heroicall, and generous thing in the World. For, I mean by Holineſſe, nothing elſe but *God ſtamped*, & *printed* upon the Soul. And we may pleaſe our ſelves, with what conceits we will; but ſo long as we are void of this, we do but *dream* of heaven, and, I know not what, fond *Paradiſe*; we do but blow up and down an *airy Bubble* of our own Phancies, which riſeth out of the froth

of our vain hearts; we do but court a *painted Heaven*; and woo happineſſe in a *Picture*: whilſt in the mean time, a *true* and *reall* Hell will ſuck in our ſouls into it, and ſoon make us ſenſible of a *ſolid woe*, and *ſubſtantiall miſery*. Divine wiſdome, hath ſo ordered the frame of the whole Univerſe, as that every thing ſhould have a certain proper Place, that ſhould be a Receptacle for it. Hell is the Sinke of all ſinne and wickedneſſe. The ſtrong *Magick* of Nature, pulls and draws every thing continually, to that place which is ſuitable to it, and to which it doth belong; ſo all theſe heavy bodies preſſe downwards, towards the Centre of our earth, being drawn in by it: In like manner Hell whereſoever it is, will by ſtrong *Sympathy* pull in all ſinne, and *Magnetically* draw it to it ſelf: as true Holineſſe, is alwayes breathing upwards, and fluttering towards Heaven, ſtriving to emboſome it ſelf with God: and it will at laſt undoubtedly be conjoyned with him, no *diſmall ſhades* of darkneſſe, can poſsibly ſtop it in its courſe, or beat it back;

Ὡς ἀεὶ τὸ ὅμοιον ἄγει θεὸς ὡς τὸ ὅμοιον.

Nay, we do but deceive our ſelves with names;

names; Hell is nothing but the Orbe of Sinne and Wickedneſſe, or elſe that Hemiſphear of Darkneſſe, in which all Evil moves: and Heaven, is the oppoſite Hemiſphear of Light, or elſe, if you pleaſe, the Bright Orbe of Truth, Holineſſe, and Goodneſſe: and we do actually in this life, inſtate our ſelves in the poſſeſsion of one or other of them. Take Sinne and Diſobedience out of Hell, and it will preſently clear up, into Light, Tranquillity, Serenity, and ſhine out into a Heaven. Every true Saint, carrieth his Heaven about with him, in his own heart; and Hell that is without him, can have no power over him. He might ſafely wade through Hell it ſelf, and like the *Three children*, paſſe through the midſt of that *fiery Furnace*, and yet not at all be ſcorched with the flames of it: he might walk through the *Valley of the ſhadow of death*, and yet *fear no evil*. Sinne, is the onely thing in the World, that is contrary to God: God is Light, and that is Darkneſſe: God is Beauty, and that is Uglineſſe and Deformity. All ſinne is direct Rebellion againſt God; and with what Notions ſoever, we may ſugar it, and ſweeten it, yet

God can never ſmile upon it, he will never make a truce with it. God declares open warre againſt ſinne, and bids defiance to it; for it is a profeſſed enemy to Gods own Life and Being. God which is infinite Goodneſſe, cannot but hate ſinne, which is purely Evil. And though ſinne be in it ſelf, but a poore, impotent, and crazy thing, nothing but Straitneſſe, Poverty, and Non-entity; ſo that of it ſelf it is the moſt wretched and miſerable thing in the world, and needeth no further puniſhment beſides it ſelf; yet Divine Vengeance, beats it off ſtill further and further from God, and whereſoever it is, will be ſure to ſcourge it, and laſh it continually. God and Sinne can never agree together.

That, I may therefore come, yet nearer to our ſelves. *This is the Meſſage, that I have now to declare unto you, That God is Light, and in him is no darkneſſe at all: if we ſay that we have Fellowſhip with him, and walke in Darkneſſe, we lie, and do not the truth.* *Chriſt*, and the *Goſpel* are light, and there is no darkneſſe at all in them; if you *ſay that you know Chriſt* and his Goſpel, & yet *keep not Chriſts Commandments*, but dearly hug, your private darling corruptions; *you*

are liars, and the truth is not in you; you have no acquaintance with the God of Light, nor the Gospel of Light. If any of you say, that you *know Christ*, and have an interest in him, and yet (as I fear, too many do) still nourish Ambition, Pride, Vainglory within your brests; harbour Malice, Revengfulnesse, & cruell Hatred to your neighbours in your hearts; eagerly scramble after this worldly Pelfe, and make the strength of your parts and endeavours serve that blind *Mammon*, the God of this World; If you wallow and tumble in the filthy puddle of fleshly Pleasures; or if you aime onely at your selves in your lives, and make your *Self* the Compasse by which you sail, and the Starre by which you steer your Course, looking at nothing higher, and more noble then *your selves*; deceive not your selves, *you have neither seen Christ, nor known him*; you are deeply incorporated, (if I may so speak) with the *Spirit of this World*, and have no true *Sympathy* with God and Christ, no *fellowship* at all with them. And (I beseech you) let us consider; Be there not many of us, that pretend much to Christ; that are plainly in our lives,

as Proud, Ambitious, Vainglorious as any others? Be there not many of us, that are as much under the power of unrúly Paſsions; as Cruell, Revengefull, Malicious, Cenſorious as others? that have our minds as deeply engaged in the World, & as much envaſſalled to Riches, Gain, Profit, thoſe great admired Deities of the ſonnes of men, and their ſouls as much overwhelmed, and ſunke with the cares of this life? Do not many of us, as much give our ſelves to the Pleaſures of the fleſh, and though not without regrets of Conſcience, yet ever now and then ſecretly ſoke our ſelves in them? Be there not many of us that have as deep a ſhare likewiſe, in Injuſtice & Oppreſsion, in *vexing the fatherleſſe and the widows*? I wiſh, it may not prove ſome of our Caſes, at that laſt day, to uſe ſuch pleas as theſe unto Chriſt in our behalfe; *Lord, I have prophecied in thy name*; I have preached many a zealous Sermon for thee; I have kept many a long Faſt; I have been very active for thy cauſe in Church, in State; nay, I never made any queſtion, but that my name was written in thy book of Life; when yet alas, we ſhall receive no other return from Chriſt,

Chriſt, but this, *I know you not; Depart from me ye Workers of Iniquity.* I am ſure, there be too many of us, that have long pretended to Chriſt, which make little or no progreſſe in *true Chriſtianity*, that is, Holineſſe of life: that ever hang hovering in a *Twilight of Grace*, and never ſeriouſly put our ſelves forwards into clear *Day-light*, but eſteem that glimmering *Crepuſculum* which we are in, and like that faint *Twilight*, better then broad open Day: whereas, *The Path of the juſt* (as the *Wiſeman* ſpeaketh) *is as the ſhining light, that ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day.* I am ſure, there be many of us, that are perpetuall *Dwarfs* in our ſpirituall Stature; like thoſe *ſilly women* (that S. *Paul* ſpeaks of) *laden with ſinnes, and led away with divers luſts*, that are *ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*: that are not now one jot taller in Chriſtianity, then we were many years ago; but have ſtill as ſickly, crazy, and unſound a temper of ſoul, as we had long before. Indeed we ſeem to do ſomething, we are alwayes moving and lifting at the ſtone of Corruption, that lies upon our hearts, but yet we never ſtirre it notwithſtanding,

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or at leaſt never roll it off from us. We are ſometimes a little troubled with the guilt of our ſinnes, and then we think we muſt thruſt our luſts out of our hearts, but afterwards we ſprinkle our ſelves over, with I know not what *Holy-water*, and ſo are contented to let them ſtill abide, quietly within us. We do every day truly confeſſe the ſame ſinnes, and pray againſt them, and yet ſtill commit them as much as ever, and lie as deeply under the power of them. We have the ſame Water to pump out in every prayer, and ſtill we let the ſame, leake in again upon us. We make a great deal of noiſe, and raiſe a great deal of duſt with our feet; but we do not move from off the ground on which we ſtood, we do not go forward at all: or if we do ſometimes make a little progreſſe, we quickly looſe again, the ground which we had gained: like thoſe upper *Planets* in the Heaven, which (as the *Aſtronomers* tell us) ſometimes move forwards, ſometimes quite backwards, and ſometimes perfectly ſtand ſtill; have their *Stations* and *Retrogradations*, as well as their *Direct Motions*. As if Religion were nothing elſe,

elſe, but a *Dancing* up and down, upon the ſame piece of ground and making ſeverall Motions and Friskings on it; and not a ſober Journying, and Travelling onwards toward ſome certain place. We Doe and Undoe; we do *Penelopes telam texere*, we weave ſometimes a *Web of Holineſſe*, but then we let our luſts come, and undoe, and unravell all again. Like *Siſyphus* in the Fable, we roll up a mighty Stone with much ado, ſweating and tugging up the Hill; and then we let it go, and tumble down again unto the bottome: and this is our conſtant work. Like thoſe *Danaides* which the *Poets* ſpeak of, we are alwayes filling water into a Sive, by our Prayers, Duties, and Performances; which ſtill runs out as faſt as we poure it in. What is it that thus cheats us and gulls us of our Religion? That makes us, thus conſtantly to tread the ſame Ring, and Circle of Duties, where we make no progreſſe at all forwards; and the further we go, are ſtill never the nearer to our journeys end? What is it that thus ſtarves our Religion; and makes it look like thoſe *Kine* in *Pharaohs* Dream, *illfavoured and lean fleſhed*;

that it hath no Colour in its face, no Bloud in its veines, no Life nor Heat at all, in its members? What is it that doth thus *bedwarfe* us in our Chriſtianity? What low, ſordid, and unworthy Principles do we act by, that thus hinder our growth, and make us ſtand at a ſtay, and keep us alwayes in the very Porch and Entrance, where we firſt began? Is it a ſleepy, ſluggiſh Conceit, That it is enough for us, if we be but once in a *State of Grace*, if we have but once ſtepped over the threſhold, we need not take ſo great paines to travel any further? Or is it another damping, choaking, ſtifling Opinion, That Chriſt hath done all for us already *without* us, and nothing need more to be done *within* us? No matter, how wicked we be in our ſelves, for we have holineſſe *without us*; no matter, how ſickly and diſeaſed our ſouls be within, for they have health *without them*. Why may we not as well be ſatisfied, and contented, to have Happineſſe without us too to all Eternity, and ſo our ſelves forever continue miſerable? *Little Children, let no man deceive you: he that doth righteouſneſſe, is righteous, even as he is righteous*: but, *he that committeth*

committeth ſinne is of the Devil. I ſhall therefore exhort you in the wholeſome words of S. Peter; *Give all diligence, to adde to your faith, vertue; and to vertue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; to patience, godlineſſe; and to godlineſſe, brotherly kindneſse; and to brotherly kindneſse, charity; For if theſe things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye ſhall neither be barren, nor unfruitfull in the knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* The Apoſtle ſtill goes on, and I cannot leave him yet; *But he that lacketh theſe things is blind, and cannot ſee far off, and hath forgotten that he was once purged from his old ſinnes. Wherefore the rather Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election ſure: for if ye do theſe things, ye ſhall never fall.* Let us not onely talk and diſpute of Chriſt, but let us indeed *put on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* Having thoſe *great and precious promiſes*, which he hath given us, let us ſtrive to be made *partakers of the Divine Nature, eſcaping the corruption that is in the world through luſt*: and being begotten again to a *lively hope* of enjoying Chriſt hereafter, *let us purifie our ſelves as he is pure.* Let us really declare, that we *know Chriſt*, that we are his Diſciples, by our

our *keeping of his Commandments* : and amongſt the reſt, that *Commandment* eſpecially which our Saviour Chriſt himſelf commendeth to his Diſciples in a peculiar manner; *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you*: and again; *Theſe things I command you, that you love one another. Let us follow peace with all men, and holineſſe, without which, no man ſhall ſee God. Let us put on as the Elect of God, holy, and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindneſſe, humbleneſſe of mind, meekneſſe, longſuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarel againſt any, even as Chriſt forgave us: And above all theſe things let us put on Charity, which is the bond of perfectneſſe. Let us in meekneſſe, inſtruct thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth, that they may recover themſelves out of the ſnares of the Devil, that are taken captive by him at his will. Beloved, Let us love another, for Love is of God, and whoſoever loveth is born of God and knoweth God.* O Divine Love! the ſweet Harmony of ſouls! the Muſick of Angels! The Joy of Gods own Heart, the very Darling of his Boſome! the Sourſe of true Happineſſe! the

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pure Quinteſſence of Heaven! That which reconciles the jarring Principles of the World, and makes them all chime together! That which melts mens Hearts into one another! ſee how S. *Paul* deſcribes it, and it cannot chooſe but enamour your affections towards it: *Love envieth not, it is not puffed up, it doth not behave it ſelf unſeemly, ſeeketh not her own, is not eaſily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoyceth not in iniquity; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things*: I may adde in a word, it is the beſt natur'd thing, the beſt complexioned thing, in the World. Let us expreſſe this ſweet harmonious Affection, in theſe jarring times: that ſo if it be poſsible, we may tune the World at laſt, into better Muſick. Eſpecially, in matters of Religion, let us ſtrive with all meekneſſe to inſtruct and convince one another. Let us endeavour to promote the *Goſpel of Peace*, the *Dove-like Goſpel* with a *Dove-like Spirit*. This was the way by which the Goſpel at firſt, was propagated in the world: *Chriſt did not cry, nor lift up his voice in the ſtreets, a bruiſed reed he did not break, and the ſmoking flax he did not quench*

and yet he brought forth judgement into victory. He whiſpered the Goſpel to us from Mount *Sion*, in a ſtill voice, and yet the ſound thereof went out quickly throughout all the earth. The Goſpel at firſt came down upon the world gently and ſoftly, like the *Dew* upon *Gideons fleece*, and yet it quickly ſoaked quite through it: and doubtleſſe this is ſtill the moſt effectuall way to promote it further. Sweetneſſe, and Ingenuity, will more powerfully command mens minds, then Paſsion, Sowreneſſe, and Severity: as the ſoft Pillow ſooner breaks the Flint, then the hardeſt Marble. Let us ἀληθεύϛν ἐν ἀγάπῃ, *follow truth in love*: and of the two indeed, be contented rather, to miſſe of the conveying of a Speculative Truth, then to part with Love. When we would convince men of any errour by the ſtrength of *Truth*, let us withall poure the ſweet Balme of Love upon their heads. *Truth* and *Love*, are two the moſt powerfull things in the world, and when they both go together, they cannot eaſily be withſtood. The Golden Beams of Truth, and the Silken Cords of Love, twiſted together, will draw men on with a

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ſweet violence, whether they will or no. Let us take heed we do not ſometimes call that Zeal for God, and his Goſpel, which is nothing elſe, but our own tempeſtuous and ſtormy Paſsion. True Zeal is a ſweet, heavenly and gentle Flame, which maketh us active for God, but alwayes within the Sphear of Love. It never calls for *Fire from Heaven*, to conſume thoſe that differ a little from us in their Apprehenſions. It is like that kind of Lightning, (which the Philoſophers ſpeak of) that melts the Sword within, but ſingeth not the Scabbard: it ſtrives to ſave the Soul, but hurteth not the Body. True Zeal is a loving thing, and makes us alwayes active to *Edification*, and not to *Deſtruction*. If we keep the Fire of Zeal within the Chimney, in its own proper place, it never doth any hurt; it onely warmeth, quickeneth, and enliveneth us: but if once we let it break out, and catch hold of the Thatch of our Fleſh, and kindle our corrupt Nature, and ſet the Houſe of our Body on fire, it is no longer Zeal, it is no heavenly Fire, it is a moſt deſtructive and devouring thing. True Zeal is an *Ignis lambens*

bens, a ſoft and gentle Flame, that will not ſcorch ones hand; it is no predatory or voracious thing: but *Carnall and fleſhly Zeal*, is like the Spirit of Gunpowder ſet on fire, that tears and blows up all that ſtands before it. True Zeal is like the *Vitall heat* in us, that we live upon, which we never feel to be angry or troubleſome; but though it gently feed upon the *Radicall Oyl* within us, that ſweet Balſame of our *Naturall Moiſture*; yet it lives lovingly with it, and maintains that by which it is fed: but that other furious & diſtempered Zeal, is nothing but a *Feaver* in the Soul. To conclude, we may learn what kind of Zeal it is, that we ſhould make uſe of in promoting the Goſpel, by an Emblem of Gods own, given us in the Scripture, thoſe *Fiery Tongues* that upon the Day of *Pentecoſt*, ſate upon the Apoſtles; which ſure were harmleſſe Flames, for we cannot reade that they did any hurt, or that they did ſo much as ſinge an haire of their heads. I will therefore ſhut up this, with that of the *Apoſtle*: *Let us keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* Let this ſoft and ſilken Knot of *Love*, tie our Hearts together; though

though our Heads and Apprehenſions cannot meet, as indeed they never will, but alwayes ſtand at ſome diſtance off from one another. Our Zeal if it be heavenly, if it be true *Veſtall Fire* kindled from above, it will not delight to tarry here below, burning up Straw and Stubble, and ſuch combuſtible things, and ſending up nothing but groſſe earthy fumes to heaven; but it will riſe up, and return back, pure as it came down, and will be ever ſtriving to carry up mens hearts to God along with it. It will be onely occupied, about the promoting of thoſe things, which are *unqueſtionably good*; and when it moves in the iraſcible way, it will quarrel with nothing but *ſinne*. Here let our zeal buſie and exerciſe it ſelf, every one of us beginning firſt at our own hearts. Let us be more Zealous then ever we have yet been, in fighting againſt our luſts, in pulling down thoſe *ſtrong holds of Sinne and Satan* in our hearts. Here let us exerciſe all our Courage and Reſolution, our Manhood and Magnanimitie. Let us truſt in the *Almighty Arme* of our God, and doubt not, but he will as well deliver us, from the *Power of*

Sinne in our hearts, as preſerve us from the *wrath to come.* Let us go out againſt theſe *uncircumciſed Philiſtines*, I mean our Luſts, not with *Shield or Spear*, not in any confidence of our own ſtrength, but in the name of the *Lord of Hoſts*, and we ſhall prevail: we ſhall overcome our Luſts, *for greater is he that is in us, then he that is in them. The Eternall God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlaſting arms: He ſhall thruſt out theſe enemies from before us, and he ſhall ſay, Deſtroy them.* We ſhall enter the *true Canaan*, the good Land of Promiſe, *that floweth with milk and honey*, the Land of Truth and Holineſſe. *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withſtand: let your loines be girt about with truth; have on the breſtplate of righteouſneſſe;* and *let your feet be ſhod with the preparation of the Goſpel of peace. Above all take the ſhield of faith, whereby you ſhall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the Wicked, and take the helmet of ſalvation, and the ſword of the ſpirit, which is the word of God.* And laſtly, be ſure of this, That ye *be ſtrong onely in the Lord*, and *in the power of his might.* There be ſome that diſhearten us in this ſpirituall warfare, and would make

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us let our weapons fall out of our hands, by working in us a deſpair of Victory. There be ſome *evil Spies*, that *weaken* the hands and the hearts of the *children* of *Iſrael*: and bring an ill report upon that land that we are to conquer, telling of nothing but ſtrange *Gyants*, the *ſonnes of Anak* there, that we ſhall never be able to overcome. *The Amalekites*, (ſay they) *dwell in the South, the Hittites, Jebuſites, Amorites in the Mountains, and the Canaanites by the Sea-coaſt*: huge armies of tall invincible *Luſts*: *we ſhall never be able to go againſt this people*, we ſhall never be able to prevail againſt our *Corruptions*. Hearken not unto them (I beſeech you) but hear what *Caleb* and *Joſhuah* ſay; *Let us go up at once, and poſſeſſe it, for we are able to overcome them*: not by our own ſtrength, but by the power of the *Lord of Hoſts*. There are indeed *Sonnes of Anak* there, there are mighty *Gyantlike Luſts*, that we are to graple with; nay there are, *Principalities*, and *Powers* too, that we are to oppoſe: but the great *Michael*, *the Captain of the Lords Hoſt* is with us; he commands in chief for us, and we need not be diſmayed. *Underſtand therefore this day,*

That the Lord thy God is he, which goeth before thee, as a consuming fire, he shall destroy these enemies, and bring them down before thy face. If thou wilt be faithfull to him, and put thy trust in him; *as the fire consumeth the stubble, and as the flame burneth up the chaff*, so will he destroy thy *Lusts* in thee: *their root shall be rottennesse, and their blossome shall go up as dust.* But let us take heed that we be not discouraged, and before we begin to fight, despair of Victorie: but to believe and hope well in the power of our God and his strength, will be half a Conquest. Let us not think, Holinesse in the hearts of men here in the World, is a forlorn, forsaken, and outcast thing from God; that he hath no regard of. Holinesse where-ever it is, though never so small, if it be but hearty and sincere, it can no more be cut off, and discontinued from God; then a *Sun-beam* here upon Earth can be broken off, from its entercourse with the *Sun*, and be left alone amidst the mire and dirt of this World. The Sun may as well discard its own *Rayes*, and banish them from it self, into some Region of darknesse, far remote from it, where they shall

ſhall have no dependence at all upon it; as God can forſake and abandon Holineſſe in the World, and leave it a poore Orphane thing, that ſhall have no influence at all from him to preſerve and keep it. Holineſſe is ſomething of God, where-ever it is; it is an *Efflux* from him, that alwayes hangs upon him, and lives in him: as the *Sun-beams* though they guild this lower World, and ſpread their golden wings over us; yet they are not ſo much here, where they ſhine, as in the Sun, from whence they flow. God cannot draw a Curtain betwixt himſelf and Holineſſe, which is nothing, but the *Splendor* and *Shining* of himſelf: He cannot hide his face from it, he cannot deſert it, in the World. He that is once *born of God, ſhall overcome the World*, and the Prince of this World too, by the Power of God in him. Holineſſe is no ſolitary neglected thing; it hath ſtronger Confederacies, greater Alliances then Sinne and Wickedneſſe. It is in league with God, and the whole Univerſe; the whole Creation ſmiles upon it: there is ſomething of God in it, and therefore it muſt needs be, a victorious and triumphant

thing. Wickedneſſe is a weak, cowardly, and guilty thing, a fearfull and trembling Shadow. It is the Child of Ignorance and Darkneſſe; it is afraid of Light, and cannot poſsibly withſtand the power of it, nor endure the ſight of its glittering Armour. It is allianced to none, but wretched forlorn and apoſtate Spirits, that do what they can, to ſupport their own weak and tottering Kingdome of Darkneſſe: but are onely ſtrong, in Weakneſſe and Impotency. The whole Politie and Commonwealth of Devils, is not ſo powerfull, as one *Child of Light*, one *Babe in Chriſt*: they are not all able to *quench* the leaſt *ſmoking flax*, to exſtinguiſh one ſpark of Grace. Darkneſſe is not able to make reſiſtance againſt Light, but ever as it comes, flies before it. But if wickedneſſe, invite the Society of Devils to it, (as we learn by the ſad experience of theſe preſent times, in many examples of thoſe that were poſſeſſed with Malice, Revengfulneſſe, and Luſt) ſo that thoſe curſed Fiends do moſt readily apply themſelves to it, and offer their ſervice to feed it and encourage it; becauſe it is their own Life and Nature,

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their own *kingdome of Darkneſſe*, which they ſtrive to enlarge, and to ſpread the Dominions of: ſhall we then think that Holineſſe, which is ſo nearly allied unto God, hath no good *Genius* at all in the World, to attend upon it, to help it and encourage it? Shall not the *Kingdome of Light*, be as true to its own Intereſt, and as vigilant for the enlarging of it ſelf, as the *Kingdome of Darkneſſe*? Holineſſe is never alone in the World, but God is alwayes with it, and his loving *Spirit*, doth ever aſſociate, and joyn it ſelf to it. He that ſent it into the World, is with it, as Chriſt ſpeaketh of himſelf, *the Father hath not left me alone, becauſe I do alwayes thoſe things that pleaſe him.* Holineſſe is the Life of God, which he cannot but feed and maintain whereſoever it is; and as the Devils are alwayes active to encourage evil, ſo we cannot imagine, but that the heavenly Hoſt of bleſſed Angels above, are as buſily employed, in the promoting of that which they love beſt, that which is deareſt to God whom they ſerve, the *Life* and *Nature of God*. *There is joy in heaven at the converſion of one ſinner*, Heaven takes notice of it; there is a *Quire*

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of Angels that ſweetly ſings the *Epithalamium* of a Soul divorced from Sinne and Satan, and eſpouſed unto Chriſt. What therefore the *Wiſeman* ſpeaks concerning *Wiſdome*, I ſhall apply to *Holineſſe*: *Take faſt hold of Holineſſe, let her not go, keep her for ſhe is thy Life: Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the iſſues of Life*, & of Death too. Let nothing be eſteemed, of greater conſequence and concernment to thee, then what thou doeſt and acteſt, how thou liveſt. Nothing *without* us can make us either happy, or miſerable; nothing can either *defile us*, or hurt us, but what *goeth out from us*, what Springeth and Bubbleth up, out of our own hearts. We have dreadfull apprehenſions, of the Flames of Hell without us; we tremble and are afraid, when we hear of *Fire and Brimſtone*, whil'ſt in the mean time, we ſecurely nouriſh within our own hearts, *a true and living Hell*,

——*Et cæco carpimur igni*:

the dark fire of our Luſts, conſumeth our bowels within, and miſerably ſcorcheth our ſouls, and we are not troubled at it. We do not perceive, how Hell ſteales upon us, whileſt we live here. And as for Heaven,

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we onely gaze abroad, expecting that it ſhould come in to us from without, but never look for the beginnings of it to ariſe within, in our own hearts.

But leſt there ſhould yet happely remain any prejudice againſt that, which I have all this while heartily commended to you; *True Holineſse*, and the *Keeping of Chriſts commandment*; as if it were a *Legall* and *Servile* thing, that would ſubject us to a *State* of *Bondage*, I muſt here needs adde a Word or two, either for the Prevention or Removall of it. I do not therefore mean, by *Holineſse*, the mere performance of outward Duties of Religion, coldly acted over as a task, not our habituall Prayings, Hearings, Faſtings, multiplied one upon another (though theſe be all good, as ſubſervient to an higher end) but I mean an inward *Soul* and *Principle* of *Divine Life*, that ſpiriteth all theſe; that enliveneth and quickeneth, the dead carkaſſe, of all our outward Performances whatſoever. I do not here urge, the *dead Law of outward Works*, which indeed if it be alone, ſubjects us to a *State of Bondage*; but the

 inward

inward Law of the Gospel, the *Law of the Spirit of Life*, then which nothing can be more free and ingenuous: for it doth not act us by Principles without us, but is an inward *Self-moving* Principle, living in our Hearts. I do not urge the Law written upon *Tables of stone* without us (though there is still a good use of that too) but the Law of Holiness written within, upon the *Fleshly Tables of our hearts*. The first, though it work us into some outward Conformity to Gods Commandments, and so hath a good effect upon the World; yet we are all this while, but like dead Instruments of Musick, that sound sweetly and harmoniously, when they are onely struck, and played upon from without, by the Musicians Hand, who hath the Theory and *Law* of Musick, *living* within himself. But the Second, the *living* Law of the Gospel, the *Law of the Spirit of Life* within us, is as if the *Soul of Musick*, should incorporate it self with the Instrument, and live in the Strings, and make them of their own accord, without any touch, or impulse from without, daunce up and down, and warble out their Harmonies. They that are acted

acted onely by an outward Law, are but like Neuroſpaſts, or thoſe little Puppets that skip nimbly up and down, and ſeem to be full of quick and ſprightly motion, whereas they are all the while moved artificially by certain Wiers and Strings from without, and not by any Principle of Motion, from themſelves within: or elſe, like Clocks and Watches, that go pretty regularly for a while, but are moved by Weights and Plummets, or ſome other Artificiall Springs, that muſt be ever now and then wound up, or elſe they ceaſe. But they that are acted by the *new Law of the Goſpel*, by the *Law of the Spirit*, they have an inward principle of life in them, that from the Centre of it ſelf, puts forth it ſelf freely and conſtantly into all obedience to the will of Chriſt. This *New Law of the Goſpel*, it is a kind of *Muſicall Soul*, informing the dead *Organ* of our Hearts, that makes them of their own accord delight to act harmoniouſly according to the Rule of Gods word. The Law that I ſpeak of, it is a *Law of Love*, which is the moſt powerfull Law in the World; and yet it freeth us in a manner from all Law without

us, becauſe it maketh us become a *Law unto our ſelves*. The more it prevaileth in us, the more it eateth up and devoureth, all other Laws without us; juſt as Aarons *Living Rod*, did ſwallow up thoſe Rods of the Magicians, that were made onely to counterfeit a little Life:

Quis Legem det amantibus?
Major lex Amor eſt ſibi.

Love is at once a Freedome from all Law, a State of pureſt Liberty, and yet a Law too, of the moſt conſtraining and indiſpenſable Neceſsity. The worſt *Law* in the World, is *the Law of Sinne, which is in our members*; which keeps us in a condition of moſt abſolute Slavery, when we are wholly under the Tyrannicall commands of our luſts: this is a cruell *Pharaoh* indeed, that ſets his hard task-maſters over us, and maketh us wretchedly drudge in Mire and Clay. The *Law of the Letter* without us, ſets us in a condition of a little more Liberty, by reſtraining of us from many outward Acts of Sinne; but yet it doth not diſenthrall us, from the power of ſinne in our hearts. But the *Law of the Spirit of life*, the *Goſpel-Law of Love*,

Love, it puts us into a condition of moſt pure and perfect Liberty; and whoſoever really entertaines this Law, he hath *thruſt out Hagar* quite, he hath *caſt out the Bondwoman and her Children*; from henceforth, *Sarah the Free woman*, ſhall live forever with him, and ſhe ſhall be to him, a Mother of many children; her ſeed ſhall be *as the ſand of the ſea-ſhoar for number*, and *as the ſtarres of heaven*. Here is Evangelicall liberty, here is Goſpel-freedome, when *the Law of the Spirit of life in Chriſt Jeſus, hath made us free, from the Law of ſinne and death*: when we have a liberty from ſinne, and not a liberty to ſinne: for our dear Lord and Maſter hath told us, that *Whoſoever committeth ſinne, he is the ſervant of it*. He that lies under the power, and vaſſallage of his baſe luſts, and yet talks of Goſpel-freedome; he is but like a poore condemned Priſoner, that in his ſleep dreams of being ſet at liberty, and of walking up and down whereſoever he pleaſeth; whilſt his Legs are all the while lock't faſt in fetters and Irons. To pleaſe our ſelves with a Notion of Goſpel-liberty, whileſt we have not a Goſpel-principle of Holineſſe within

us, to free us from the power of ſinne, it is nothing elſe, but to gild over our Bonds and Fetters, and to phancy our ſelves to be in a Golden Cage. There is a Straitneſſe, Slavery, and Narrowneſſe in all Sinne: Sinne crowds and crumples up our ſouls, which if they were freely ſpread abroad, would be as wide, and as large as the whole Univerſe. No man is truly free, but he that hath his *will* enlarged to the extent of Gods own will, by loving whatſoever God loves, and nothing elſe. Such a one, doth not fondly hug this and that particular created good thing, and envaſſal himſelf unto it, but he loveth every thing that is lovely, beginning at God, and deſcending down to all his Creatures, according to the ſeverall degrees of perfection in them. He injoyes a boundleſſe Liberty, and a boundleſſe Sweetneſſe, according to his boundleſſe Love. He inclaſpeth the whole World within his outſtretched arms, his Soul is as wide as the whole Univerſe, as big as *yeſterday, to day, and forever.* Whoſoever is once acquainted with this Diſpoſition of Spirit, he never deſires any thing elſe: and he loves the *Life*

of

of God in himſelf, dearer then his own Life. To conclude this therefore; If we love Chriſt, and *keep his commandments, his commandments will not be grievous to us: His yoke will be eaſie, and his burden light*: it will not put us into a State of Bondage, but of perfect Liberty. For it is moſt true of Evangelicall Obedience, what the wiſe man ſpeaketh of Wiſdome; *Her wayes, are wayes of pleaſantneſſe, and all her paths are peace; She is a tree of Life to thoſe that lay hold upon her, and happy are all they that retain her.*

I will now ſhut up all with one or two *Conſiderations* to perſwade you further, to the *keeping of Chriſts Commandments.*

Firſt, from the deſire which we all have of *Knowledge*; If we would indeed *know* Divine Truths, the onely way to come to this, is by *keeping of Chriſts Commandments.* The Groſſeneſſe of our apprehenſions in *Spirituall things*, and our many miſtakes, that we have about them, proceed from nothing, but thoſe dull and foggy *Stemes*, which riſe up from our *foul hearts* and becloud our Underſtandings. If we did but

heartily

heartily comply with Chriſts command-ments, and purge our hearts, from all groſſe and ſenſuall affections, we ſhould not then look about for *Truth* wholly without our ſelves, and enſlave our ſelves to the Dictates of this and that Teacher, and hang upon the *Lips of men*; but we ſhould find the Great Eternall God, inwardly teaching our ſouls, and continually inſtructing us more and more, in the myſteries of his will: and *out of our bellies ſhould flow rivers of living waters.* Nothing puts a ſtop and hinderance to the paſſage of Truth in the World, but the Carnality of our hearts, the Corruption of our lives. 'Tis not wrangling Diſputes and Syllogiſticall Reaſonings, that are the mighty Pillars, that underprop *Truth* in the World; if we would but underſet it with the Holineſſe of our Hearts and Lives, it ſhould never fail. *Truth* is a prevailing and conquering thing, and would quickly overcome the World, did not the Earthineſſe of our Diſpoſitions, and the Darkneſſe of our falſe hearts hinder it. Our Saviour Chriſt, bids the *Blind man*, waſh off the *Clay* that was upon his eyes, in the *Pool of Siloam*, and then

when he should see clearly; intimating this to us, that it is the Earthinesse of mens Affections, that darkens the Eye of their understandings in Spirituall things. Truth is alwayes ready, and near at hand, if our eyes were not closed up with Mud, that we could but open them, to look upon it. Truth, alwayes waits upon our souls, and offers it self freely to us, as the Sun offers its beams, to every Eye, that will but open, and let them shine in upon it. If we could but purge our Hearts, from that filth, and defilement, which hangeth about them, there would be no doubt at all of *Truths* prevailing in the World. For, *Truth is great, and stronger then all things; all the Earth calleth upon Truth, and the heaven blesseth it, all works shake and tremble at it. The Truth endureth, and is alwayes strong, it liveth and conquereth for evermore. She is the Strength, Kingdome, Power and Majestie of all ages. Blessed be the God of Truth.*

Last of all, if we desire a true Reformation, as we seem to do; Let us begin here in reforming our *hearts* and *lives*; in *keeping of Christs Commandments*. All outward Formes and Models of Reformation, though they be

never ſo good in their kind; yet they are of little worth to us, without this *inward Reformation of* the heart. Tinne, or Lead, or any other baſer Metal, if it be caſt into never ſo good a Mold, and made up into never ſo elegant a Figure; yet it is but Tin, or Lead ſtill, it is the ſame Metal, that it was before. And if we be Molded into never ſo good a Form of outward Government, unleſſe we *new mold our Hearts* within too; we are but a little better, then we were before. If adulterate Silver, that hath much Allay or Droſſe in it, have never ſo current a Stamp put upon it, yet it will not paſſe notwithſtanding, when the Touch-ſtone trieth it. We muſt be *reformed within*, with a *Spirit* of *Fire*, and a *Spirit of Burning*, to purge us from the Droſſe, and Corruption of our hearts; and refine us as Gold and Silver; and then we ſhall be *reformed truly*, and not before. When this once comes to paſſe, then ſhall Chriſt be ſet *upon his Throne* indeed, then the Glory *of the Lord ſhall overflow the Land*; then we ſhall be a People acceptable unto him, and as *Mount Sion*, which he dearly loved.

FINIS.

Die Mercurii ultimo Martii.
1647.

Ordered by the Commons assembled in Parliament: That Sr Henry Mildmay, *do from this House give thanks unto* Mr Cudworth, *for the great paines he took, in the Sermon he preached on this day at* Margarets Westminster, *before the House of Commons (it being a day of Publick Humiliation) and that he do desire him to print his Sermon. Wherein he is to observe the like Priviledge in printing thereof, as others in like kind usually have had.*

H. Elsynge,
Cler. Parl. D. Com.